



Morning Alert - Friday, December 8, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports that the chief priest of Tomioka Hachimangu Shrine in Tokyo and her driver were attacked last night, saying that the chief priest later died and the driver was severely injured. The network said the younger brother of the priest and his girlfriend apparently attacked them and the brother later killed his girlfriend and committed suicide.

Top stories in national dailies included criticism from the British, French, and other world leaders of President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Asahi, Mainichi); a GOJ plan to set up a new inter-agency counter-terrorism information center (Yomiuri); an estimate for listed companies in Japan to raise annual dividend payments this fiscal year by 7% to a record 12.8 trillion yen (Nikkei); and the murder of the chief priest of Tomioka Hachimangu Shrine in Tokyo (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Japan remains “ambiguous” on U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israeli capital

Asahi wrote that despite European leaders' criticism of President Trump's declaration that the United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the GOJ has not expressed a clear stance on the issue. Foreign Minister Kono stated on Thursday: “We welcome President Trump's strong commitment to promoting a permanent peace agreement and his support for a two-state solution.” He added, however: “We are concerned that the situation in the Middle East could deteriorate following the U.S. announcement.”

The paper wrote that the Abe administration is mulling the idea of inviting the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan to Japan in an effort to address the issue. Although Kono is planning to visit the Middle East, including Israel and the Palestinian Authority, at the end of this month, some in the GOJ are insisting that the foreign minister should rethink the timing of his trip to the region. The paper wrote that it is difficult for Japan to squarely oppose the decision made by President Trump because of its alliance relationship with the United States, with an unnamed senior MOFA official saying Japan has no choice but to take an “ambiguous” position on the matter because Tokyo may lose the trust of Middle East nations if it supports the U.S. decision.

However, Yomiuri quoted Kono as telling reporters on Thursday that Japan has no intention to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and wrote that the foreign minister stressed Japan’s position of not conforming to the policy of the United States.

Trilateral summit between Japan, China, South Korea unlikely this year

Sankei and Nikkei wrote that the GOJ has given up on the idea of hosting a trilateral summit with China and South Korea by the end of this year. Sankei wrote that Beijing has not responded positively to the invitation from Tokyo. The papers wrote that although the GOJ is looking into the possibility of hosting the summit in January, the schedule may be delayed until April or later because the Diet session will convene in January, South Korea will host the Winter Olympics in February, and China will hold its National People’s Congress in March.

UN envoy meets with North Korean foreign minister

All papers wrote that North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency reported that Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho held a meeting with UN Undersecretary General for Political Affairs Feltman in Pyongyang on Thursday without providing any detailed information about their discussions. Yomiuri wrote that Ri may have expressed his nation’s readiness to enter dialogue if the United States agrees to recognize the DPRK as a nuclear power.

SECURITY

GOJ to allocate funds for missile defense in FY2017 supplementary budget

Asahi front-paged a report saying that the GOJ has decided to set aside 2.1 billion yen in the FY2017 supplementary budget for the deployment of the Aegis Ashore system. The government plans to officially approve the budget allocation at a cabinet meeting on Dec. 22 or later. Although the GOJ had originally planned to earmark the funds in the FY2018 budget, it will move up the schedule and begin preparations for the deployment by signing a contract with the U.S. government by the end of this fiscal year. The paper wrote that although the GOJ plans to begin operating the Aegis Ashore system in FY2023, it may move up the schedule in view of the threat posed by North Korea. The 2.1 billion yen allocation will include technological support from the U.S., which manufactures the system. After signing a contract with the United States, the GOJ will study

potential issues such as electromagnetic interference that might be caused by the installation of the missile interception system at GSDF camps in Akita and Yamaguchi prefectures by inviting technical experts from the United States. The GOJ also plans to allocate additional funds related to the Aegis Ashore deployment in the FY2018 budget. The paper quoted a senior Defense Ministry official as saying that the ministry is hoping to begin operating the system before FY2023 by starting preparations earlier than originally planned. Yomiuri ran a similar inside-page report.

Incident in which apparent U.S. aircraft part fell on kindergarten provokes local backlash

All networks reported on an incident yesterday in which what is believed to be part of a U.S. aircraft fell onto the roof of a kindergarten near MCAS Futenma. NHK said the incident provoked a backlash in Okinawa, adding that about 100 people held a rally last night in front of Camp Foster. Video showed the protesters holding signs saying Okinawa is not under occupation and calling for the return of Futenma airfield. According to the network, the U.S. military told the police that a cover attached to a helicopter apparently fell off the aircraft. The networks quoted Okinawa Governor Onaga as saying at a press conference last night: "It was one step away from being a fatal incident. It was a serious incident."

All papers also reported on the incident in their city news sections, saying that based on information that a CH-53 helicopter was flying over the school around that time, the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau and the Okinawa police are investigating the possibility that the object fell from a Marine aircraft. Yomiuri wrote that a Marine official told the paper that they are taking the incident seriously and closely cooperating with the local police in conducting the investigation.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty visits Tohoku

Sankei reported online that Ambassador Hagerty visited Miyagi Prefecture on Thursday. In Sendai, the Ambassador observed the U.S.-Japan joint Yama Sakura exercise at an SDF camp, visited the Land Ministry's disaster management center, and paid a courtesy call on Miyagi Governor Murai. This was the Ambassador's first visit to the Tohoku region since he assumed the post in August. Sankei wrote that in view of the rising tensions over North Korea, the Ambassador stressed the importance of the bonds between the United States and Japan by reportedly stating that there has never been as important a time for the two nations to work closely together. Nikkei also reported online that the governor asked for the Ambassador's cooperation in encouraging U.S. investment in the prefecture. The two officials also discussed the TOMODACHI Initiative, in which some 6,000 Japanese and American students have participated.

Ambassador voices hope for deepening ties with Tohoku and U.S. through youth exchange

Sendai-based Kahoku Shimpō published an interview with Ambassador Hagerty, who visited the largest city in the Tohoku region for the first time on Thursday. The Ambassador said Operation Tomodachi in the aftermath of the 3/11 triple disaster in 2011 was “transformed” into the TOMODACHI Initiative, under which young people of both nations have communicated closely by visiting each other’s country under corporate sponsorship. He underscored that the U.S. Embassy and U.S. companies plan to continue to support the initiative so that future generations can further reinforce the already strong bilateral ties. He said that as America’s top diplomat in Japan, he is committed to strengthening the trans-Pacific alliance. The Ambassador expressed hope to make bilateral trade “mutually beneficial and fair.”

